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THE  
S P E E C H  
OF  
VILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.  
REPRESENTATIVE  
FOR THE  
C O U N T Y O F Y O R K,  
ON  
WEDNESDAY THE 13TH OF MAY,  
1789,  
ON THE QUESTION OF THE  
ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.  
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
THE RESOLUTIONS THEN MOVED,  
AND  
A SHORT SKETCH  
OF THE  
SPEECHES OF THE OTHER MEMBERS.

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T H E  
S P E E C H  
O F  
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

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SIR WILLIAM DOLBEN \*,

WHEN I consider the magnitude of the subject which I am to bring before the House—a subject, in which the interests, not of this country, nor of Europe alone, but of the whole world, and of posterity, are involved; and when I think, at the same time, on the weakness of the advocate who has undertaken this great cause—when these reflections press upon my mind, it is impossible for me not to feel both terrified and concerned at my own inadequacy to such a task. But when I reflect, however, on the encouragement which I have had,

\* Chairman of the Committee.

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through the whole course of a long and laborious examination of this question, how much labour I have experienced, and how conviction has increased within my own mind, in proportion as I have advanced in my labours;—when I reflect, especially, that, however adverse any Gentlemen may now be, yet we shall all, most assuredly, be of one opinion in the end. When I turn myself to these thoughts, I take courage—I determine to forget all my other fears, and I march forward with a firmer step, in the full assurance that my cause will bear me out, and that I shall be able to justify, upon the clearest principles, every resolution in my hand—the avowed end of which, Sir, is,—the total Abolition of the Slave Trade.

I wish exceedingly, in the outset, to guard both myself and the House from entering into the subject with any sort of passion. It is not their passions I shall appeal to—I ask only for their cool and impartial reason; and I wish not to take them by surprise, but to deliberate; point by point, upon every part of this question. I mean

not

not to accuse any one, but to take the shame upon myself, in common, indeed, with the whole Parliament of Great Britain, for having suffered this horrid trade to be carried on, under their authority. We are all guilty—we ought all to plead guilty, and not to exculpate ourselves, by throwing the blame on others ; and I therefore deprecate every kind of reflection, against the various descriptions of people who are more immediately involved in this wretched business.

In opening the nature of the Slave Trade, I need only observe, that it is found, by experience, to be just such as every man, who uses his reason, would infallibly conclude it to be. For my own part, so clearly am I convinced of the mischiefs inseparable from it, that I should hardly want any further evidence than my own mind would furnish, by the most simple deductions. Facts, however, are now laid before the House. A report has been made by his Majesty's Privy Council, which, I trust, every Gentleman has read, and which ascertains the Slave Trade to be just such in practice as we know,

from theory, that it must be. What should we suppose must naturally be the consequence of our carrying on a Slave Trade with Africa? With a country, vast in its extent, not utterly barbarous, but civilized in a very small degree? Does any one suppose a Slave Trade would *help* their civilization? That Africa would *profit* by such an intercourse? Is it not plain, that she must *suffer* from it? That civilization must be checked; that her barbarous manners must be made more barbarous; and that the happiness of her millions of inhabitants must be prejudiced by her intercourse with Britain? Does not every one see, that a Slave Trade, carried on around her coasts, must carry violence and desolation to her very centre? That, in a Continent, just emerging from barbarism, if a Trade in Men is established—if her men are all converted into goods, and become commodities that can be bartered, it follows, they must be subject to ravage just as goods are; and this too, at a period of civilization, when there is no protecting Legislature to defend this their only sort of property, in the same manner

manner as the rights of property are maintained by the legislature of every civilized country.

We see then, in the nature of things, how easily all the practices of Africa are to be accounted for. Her kings are never compelled to war, that we can hear of, by public principles,—by national glory—still less by the love of their people. In Europe it is the extension of commerce, the maintenance of national honor, or some great public object, that is ever the motive to war with every monarch; but, in Africa, it is the personal *avarice* and *sensuality* of their kings: these two vices of avarice and sensuality, (the most powerful and predominant in natures thus corrupt) we tempt, we stimulate in all these African Princes, and we depend upon these vices for the very maintenance of the Slave Trade. Does the king of Barbeffin want brandy\*? He has only to send his troops, in the night-time, to burn and desolate a village; the captives will serve as commodities, that may be bartered with the British trader. What a

\* Vide Dr. Spaarman's evidence before the Privy Council.

striking view of the wretched state of Africa does the tragedy of Calabar furnish ! Two towns, formerly hostile, had settled their differences, and by an inter-marriage among their chiefs, had each pledged themselves to peace ; but the Trade in Slaves was prejudiced by such pacifications, and it became, therefore, the policy of our traders to renew the hostilities. This, their policy, was soon put in practice, and the scene of carnage which followed was such, that it is better, perhaps, to refer Gentlemen to the Privy Council's Report, than to agitate their minds by dwelling on it.

The Slave Trade, in its very nature, is the source of such kind of tragedies, nor has there been a single person, almost, before the Privy Council, who does not add something, by his testimony, to the mass of evidence upon this point. Some, indeed, of these Gentlemen, and particularly the Delegates from Liverpool, have endeavoured to reason down this plain principle ; some have palliated it, but there is not one, I believe, who does not, more or less, admit it.

Some



Some, nay most, I believe, have admitted the Slave Trade to be the chief cause of wars in Africa. Mr. Penny \* has called it the *concurrent* cause—some confess it to be *sometimes* the cause; but argue, that it cannot often be so.—Here I must make one observation, which, I hope, may be done, without offence to any one, and which I do, once for all, though it applies equally to many other evidences upon this subject. I mean to lay it down, as my principle, that evidences, and especially *interested* evidences, are not to be the judges of the *argument*. In matters of *fact*, of which they speak; I admit their competency; I mean not to suspect their credibility, with respect to any thing they see or hear, or themselves personally know; but, in reasoning about *causes and effects*, I hold them to be totally incompetent. So far, therefore, from submitting to their conclusions, in this respect, I utterly discard them. I take their premises readily and fairly; but, *upon* these premises, I must judge for myself: and the

\* Liverpool Delegate.

House, I trust—nay, I perfectly well know, will, in like manner judge for itself. Confident assertions, therefore, not of facts, but of the *supposed consequences* of facts, however pressed by the Liverpool Delegates, or any other interested persons, go for nothing in my estimation; and it is necessary that Parliament should proceed upon this principle; as well in this as every other public question, in which interested evidences must be examined. Thus the African Committee have reported, that very few enormities, *in their opinion*, can have been practised in Africa; because, in forty years, only two complaints have been made to them. I admit the fact to them undoubtedly; but, I trust, Gentlemen will judge for themselves, whether Parliament is to rest satisfied that there are no abuses in Africa, in spite of all the positive proofs of so many witnesses on the spot to the contrary. Whether, for instance, Mr. Wadstrom's evidence, Dr. Spaarman's, Captain Hill's, are to go for nothing, many of whom, either saw the battles, were told by the kings themselves, that it was for the sake of slaves they went  
to



to battle, or conversed with a variety of prisoners taken by these very means. In truth, an enquiry from the African Committee whether any foul play prevails in Africa, is somewhat like an application to the Custom-house officers, to know whether any smuggling is going on; the officer may tell you, that very few seizures are made, and very few frauds come to his knowledge; but does it follow, that Parliament must agree to all the *reasonings* of the officer; and, though smuggling be ever so notorious throughout the land, must agree there is no smuggling, because the officer reports that he makes very few seizures, and seldom hears of it? I will not believe, therefore, the *mere opinions* of African traders, concerning the nature and consequences of the slave trade. It is a trade in *its principle* most inevitably calculated to spread disunion among the African princes, to sow the seeds of every mischief, to inspire enmity, to destroy humanity; and it is found in *practice*, by the most abundant testimony, to have had the effect in Africa of carrying misery, devastation, and ruin  
 wherever

wherever its baneful influence has extended.

Having now disposed of the first part of this subject, I must speak of the *transit of the slaves in the West Indies*.

This, I confess, in my own opinion, is the most wretched part of the whole subject. *So much misery condensed in so little room*, is more than the human imagination had ever before conceived. I will not accuse the Liverpool merchants : I will allow them—nay, I will believe them to be men of humanity ; and I will therefore believe, if it were not for the multitude of these wretched objects, if it were not for the enormous magnitude and extent of the evil which distracts their attention from individual cases, and makes them think generally, and therefore less feelingly on the subject, they never would have persisted in the trade. I verily believe, therefore, if the wretchedness of any *one* of the many hundred negroes stowed in each ship could be brought before their view, and remain within the sight of the African merchant,

chant, that there is no one among them, whose heart would bear it ?—Let any one imagine to himself, 6 or 700 of these wretches chained two and two, surrounded with every object that is nauseous and disgusting, diseased, and struggling under every kind of wretchedness !—How can we bear to think of such a scene as this ? One would think it had been determined to heap upon them all the varieties of bodily pain, for the purpose of blunting the feelings of their mind ; and yet, in this very point (to shew the power of human prejudice), the situation of the slaves has been described by Mr. Norris, one of the Liverpool delegates, in a manner which, I am sure, will convince the House how interest can draw a film over the eyes, so thick, that total blindness could do no more, and how it is our duty, therefore, to trust not to the reasonings of interested men, or to their way of colouring a transaction.

“ Their *apartments*,” says Mr. Norris, “ are *fitted up* as much for their advantage as circumstances will admit.” The right angle of one indeed is *connected* with the left angle of another *by a small iron fetter*; and, if they

they are turbulent, by another on their wrists. “ They have several meals a-day ; some,” as he tells you, “ of *their own country provisions, with the best sauces of African cookery* ; and, by way of variety, another meal of pulse, &c. according to European taste. After breakfast they have water to wash themselves, while their apartments are perfumed with frankincense and lime-juice. Before dinner, they are amused after the manner of their country. The song and the dance are *promoted* ;” and, as if the whole was really a scene of pleasure and dissipation, it is added, that games of chance are furnished. “ The men play and sing, while the women and girls make fanciful ornaments with beads, which they are plentifully supplied with.” Such is the sort of strain in which the Liverpool Delegates, and particularly Mr. Norris, gave evidence before the Privy Council.

What will the House think, when, by the concurring testimony of other witnesses, the true history is laid open. The slaves, who are sometimes described as rejoicing at their captivity, are so wrung with misery  
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at leaving their country, that it is the constant practice to *set sail in the night*, lest they should be sensible of their departure. The *pulse* which Mr. Norris talks of are *horse beans*; and the scantiness, both of water and provision, was suggested by the very *legislature of Jamaica*, in the report of their Committee, to be a subject that called for the interference of Parliament. Mr. Norris talks of frankincense and lime-juice; when all the surgeons tell you, the slaves are stowed so close, that there is not room to tread among them: and when you have it in evidence from Sir George Yonge, that even in a ship which wanted 200 of her complement, *the stench was intolerable*. The song and the dance, says Mr. Norris, are *promoted*. It had been more fair, perhaps, if he had explained that word *promoted*. The truth is, that, for the sake of exercise, these miserable wretches, loaded with chains, oppressed with disease and wretchedness, are forced to dance by the terror of the lash, and sometimes by the actual use of it. “I,” says one of the other evidences, “was employed to dance the men, while another person

person danced the women." Such then is the meaning of the word *promoted*; and it may be observed too, with respect to food, that an instrument is sometimes carried out, in order to force them to eat, which is the same sort of proof how much they enjoy themselves in that instance also. As to their singing; what shall we say, when we are told, that their songs are songs of lamentation upon their departure, which, while they sing, they are always in tears, inso-much that one Captain (more humane, as I should conceive him, therefore, than the rest) threatened one of the women with a flogging, because the mournfulness of her song was too painful for his feelings.

In order, however, not to trust too much to any sort of description, I will call the attention of the House to one species of evidence, which is absolutely infallible. Death at least, is a sure ground of evidence, and the proportion of deaths will not only confirm, but, if possible, will even aggravate our suspicion of their misery in the transit. It will be found, upon an average of all the ships of which evidence has been given at  
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the Privy Council, that exclusive of those who perish before they sail, not less than  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. perish in the passage. Besides these, the Jamaica report tells you, that not less than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. die on shore before the day of sale, which is only a week or two from the time of landing. One third more die in the seasoning, and this in a country exactly like their own, where they are healthy and happy, as some of the evidences would pretend. The diseases, however, which they contract on shipboard, the astringent washes which are to hide their wounds, and the mischievous tricks used to make make them up for sale, are, as the Jamaica report says, (a most precious and valuable report, which I shall often have to advert to) one principal cause of this mortality. Upon the whole, however, here is a mortality of about 50 per cent, and this among negroes who are not bought unless quite healthy at first, and unless (as the phrase is with cattle), they are found in wind and limb.

How then can the House refuse its belief to the multiplied testimonies, before the

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privy Council, of the savage treatment of the Negroes in the middle passage?—Nay, indeed, what need is there of any evidence? The number of deaths speaks for itself, and makes all such enquiry superfluous.

As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the Slave Trade, I confess to you, Sir, so enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear, that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A Trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the Policy be what it might,—let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had effected its abolition.—Such enormities as these having once come within my knowledge, I should not have been faithful to the sight of my eyes, to the use of my senses and my reason, if I had shrunk from attempting the abolition; It is true, indeed, my mind was harrassed beyond measure; for when West India Planters and Merchants retorted it upon me, that it was the British Parliament had authorized this Trade ;



Trade ; when they said to me, “ It is *your* Acts of Parliament,—it is *your* encouragement,—it is faith in *your laws*, in *your* protection, that has tempted us into this Trade, and has now made it necessary to us : ” It became difficult, indeed, what to answer ; if the ruin of the West Indies threatened us on the one hand, while this load of wickedness pressed upon us on the other, the alternative, indeed, was awful.

It naturally suggested itself to me, how strange it was that providence, however mysterious in its ways, should so have constituted the world, as to make one part of it depend for its existence on the depopulation and devastation of another.

I could not, therefore, help distrusting the arguments of those, who insisted that the plundering of Africa, was necessary for the cultivation of the West Indies. I could not believe that the same Being who forbid rapine and bloodshed, had made rapine and bloodshed necessary to the well-being of any

part of his universe, I felt a confidence in this principle, and took the resolution to act upon it : soon indeed the light broke in upon me ; the suspicion of my mind was every day confirmed by encreasing information, the truth became clear, the evidence I have to offer upon this point, is now decisive and compleat ; and I wish to observe, with submission, but with perfect conviction of heart, what an instance is this how safely we may trust the rules of justice, the dictates of conscience, and the laws of God, in opposition even to the seeming impolicy of these eternal principles.

I hope now to prove, by authentic evidence, that in truth the West Indies have nothing to fear from the total and immediate abolition of the Slave Trade : I will enter minutely into this point, and I do intreat the most exact attention of gentlemen most interested in this part of the question ; the resolutions I have to offer are many and particular, for the purpose of bringing each point under a separate discussion ; and thus

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I hope it will be shewn, that Parliament is not disposed to overlook the interests of the West Indies.

The principle, however, upon which I found the necessity of abolition is *not Policy* but *Justice*,—but though justice be the principle of the measure, yet, I trust, I shall distinctly prove it to be reconcileable with our truest political interest,

In entering, therefore, into the next branch of my subject, namely, *the state of slaves in the West Indies*, I would observe, that here, as in many other cases, it happens that the owner or principal, generally sends out the best orders imaginable, which the manager upon the spot may pursue or not, as he pleases. I do not accuse even the manager of any native cruelty, he is a person made like ourselves (for nature is much the same in all persons) but it is *habit* that generates cruelty :—This man looking down upon his Slaves as a set of Beings of another nature from himself, can have no sympathy for them, and it is sympathy, and nothing else

than sympathy, which according to the best writers and judges of the subject, is the true spring of humanity. Let us ask then what are the causes of the mortality in the West Indies :—

In the first place, the *disproportion of sexes*; an evil, which, when the Slave Trade is abolished, must in the course of nature cure itself.

In the second place, *the disorders contracted in the middle passage*: and here let me touch upon an argument for ever used by the advocates for the Slave Trade, the fallacy of which is no where more notorious than in this place.

It is said to be the *interest* of the traders to use their slaves well: the astringent washes, escharotics, and mercurial ointments by which they are made up for sale, is one answer to this argument. In this instance it is not their interest to use them well; and although in some respects self-interest and humanity will go together, yet unhappily  
through

through the whole progress of the Slave Trade, the very converse of this principle is continually occurring.

A third cause of deaths in the West Indies is *excessive labour joined with improper food*. I mean not to blame the West Indians, for this evil springs from the very nature of things ;—in this country the work is fairly paid for, and distributed among our labourers, according to the reasonableness of things ; and if a trader or manufacturer finds his profits decrease, he retrenches his own expences, he lessens the number of his hands, and every branch of trade finds its proper level. In the West Indies the whole number of Slaves remains with the same master,—is the master pinched in his profits ? The slave allowance is pinched in consequence ; for as charity begins at home, the usual gratification of the master will never be given up, so long as there is a possibility of making the retrenchment from the allowance of the slaves. There is, therefore, a constant tendency to the very minimum with respect to slaves allowance ; and if in any one hard year the slaves get through upon a reduced allowance, from the

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very nature of man it must happen, that this becomes a precedent upon other occasions ; nor is the gradual destruction of the slave a consideration sufficient to counteract the immediate advantage and profit that is got by their hard usage. Here then we perceive again, how the argument of interest fails also with respect to the treatment of slaves in the West Indies. Interest is undoubtedly the great spring of action in the affairs of mankind ; but it is *immediate* and *present*, not *future* and *distant* interest, however real, that is apt to actuate us. We may trust that men will follow their interest when present impulse and interest correspond, but not otherwise. That this is a true observation may be proved by every thing in life.—Why do we make laws to punish men ? It is their interest to be upright and virtuous, without these laws : but there is a present impulse continually breaking in upon their better judgment ; an impulse contrary to their permanent and known interest, which it is not even in the power of all our laws sufficiently to refrain. It is ridiculous to say, therefore, that men will be bound by their interest, when present  
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gain or when the force of passion is urging them : It is no less ridiculous than if we were to say that a stone cannot be thrown into the air, nor any body move along the earth, because the great principle of gravitation must keep them for ever fast. The principle of gravitation is true ; and yet in spite of it there are a thousand motions which bodies may be driven into continually, and upon which we ought as much to reckon as on gravitation itself. This principle, therefore, of self-interest, which is brought in to answer every charge of cruelty throughout the Slave Trade, is not to be thus generally admitted. That the allowance is too short in the West Indies appears very plain also from the evidence ; the allowance in the prisons I conceive must be an under allowance, and yet I find it to be somewhat less than this : Dr. ADAIR (who is not very favourable to my propositions, and who by way of evidence wrote a sort of pamphlet against me to the Privy Council) has said that even *he* thinks their food at crop-time too little ; and I observe from Governor ORD's statement that he ac-

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counts for their being more healthy at a less favourable season of the year, from their being better fed at the unfavourable season.

Another cause of the mortality of slaves is, the dreadful dissoluteness of their manners. Here it might be said, that self-interest must induce the planters to wish for some order and decency around their families; but in this case also, it is slavery itself that is the mischief. Slaves, considered as cattle, left without instruction, without any institution of marriage, so depressed as to have no means almost of civilization, will undoubtedly be dissolute; and, until attempts are made to raise them a little above their present situation, this source of mortality will remain.

Some evidences indeed have endeavoured to disprove that there is any particular wretchedness among the slaves in the West Indies. Admiral Barrington tells you, he has seen them look so happy, that he has sometimes wished himself one of them. I conceive that, in a case like this, an Admiral's



ral's evidence is perhaps the very worst that can be taken. It is as if a King were to judge of the private happiness of his soldiers by seeing them on a review day. The sight of the Admiral would no doubt exhilarate their faces; he would see them in their best clothes, and they, perhaps, might hope for a few of the crumbs which fell from the Admiral's table; but does it follow that there is no hard treatment of slaves in the West Indies? The Admiral's wish to be one of these slaves himself, proves perhaps that he was in an odd humour at the moment, or perhaps it might mean (for all the world knows his humanity), that he could wish to alleviate their sufferings, by taking a share upon himself; but at least it proves nothing of their general treatment; and, at any rate, it is but a negative proof which affects not the other evidences to the contrary.

It is now to be remarked, that *all* these causes of mortality among the slaves do undoubtedly admit of a remedy, and it is the abolition

abolition of the slave trade that will serve as this remedy: When the manager shall know, that a fresh importation is not to be had from Africa, and that he cannot retrieve the deaths he occasions by any new purchases, humanity must be introduced; an improvement in the system of treating them will thus infallibly be effected, an assiduous care of their health and of their morals, marriage institutions, and many other things, as yet little thought of, will take place; because they will be absolutely necessary.

Births will thus encrease naturally; instead of fresh accessions of the same negroes from Africa; each generation will then improve upon the former, and thus will the West Indies themselves eventually profit by the abolition of the Slave Trade.

But, Sir, I will shew by experience already had, how the multiplication of slaves depends upon their good treatment. All sides agree, that slaves are much better treat-  
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ed now than they were thirty years ago in the West Indies, and that there is every day a growing improvement.

I will shew, therefore, by authentic documents, how their numbers have encreased (or rather how the decrease has lessened), in the same proportion as the treatment has improved.

There were in Jamaica, in the year 1761, 147,000 slaves; in the year 1787, there were 256,000; in all this period of 26 years, 165,000 were imported, which would be upon an average 2150 per annum, there being, on an average of the whole 26 years, 1 1-15th per cent. yearly diminution of the number of slaves on the island.

In fact, however, I find that the diminution in the first period, when they were the worst used, was  $2\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. in the next 7 years it was 1 per cent. and the average of the last period is 3-5ths per cent. It should also be observed, that there has lately been, on account of the war, a much more  
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than ordinary diminution, which was the case also in the former war, besides that 15,000 have been destroyed by the late famine and hurricanes. Upon these premises I ground a conclusion, that in Jamaica there is at this time an actual encrease of population among the slaves begun. It may fairly be presumed, that since the year 1782 this has been the case, and that the births by this time exceed the deaths by about 1000 or 1100 per annum. It is true, the sexes are not altogether equal; but this difference is so small, that if the proper number of women were added, the births to be expected in consequence would be no more than 300 per annum, which shews this to be a matter of little consequence.

In the island of Barbadoes the case is nearly the same as at Jamaica.

In St. Christophers, there are 9600 females, and 10,300 males; so that an increase by birth, if the treatment is tolerable, may fairly be expected.

In Dominica, Governor Ord writes, that there is a natural increase, though it is yet inconsiderable, and though the smuggling in that island makes it not appear so favourably.

In Nevis there are absolutely five women to four men.

In Antigua, the epidemical disorders have lately cut off 1-4th or 1-5th of the negroes; but this cannot be expected to return, especially when the grand cause of epidemical disorders is removed.

In Bermudas and the Bahamas there is an actual increase.

In Montserrat there is much the same decrease as there has been in Jamaica, which is to be accounted for by the emigrations from that island.

Such, Sir, is the state of the negroes in our West India islands; and it is not only founded upon authentic documents from  
 3 thence,



thence, but it is also confirmed by a variety of other proofs. Mr. Long, whose works are looked up to in the islands as a sort of West India Gospel upon these subjects, lays it down as a principle, that when there are two negroes upon an island to three hog-heads of sugar, the work for them will be so moderate, as to ensure a natural increase; and there is now much more than this proportion. It can be proved too, that a variety of individuals, by good usage, have more than kept up their stock.

But, allowing even the number of negroes to be deficient, still there are many other resources to be had—the waste of labour which now prevails—the introduction of the plough and other machinery—the division of work, which in free and civilized countries, is the grand source of wealth—the reduction of the number of negro servants, of whom not less than from 20 to 40 are kept in ordinary families.—All these I touch upon merely as hints, to shew that the West Indies are not bereaved of all the means of cultivating their estates, as some persons have

have feared. But, Sir, even if these suppositions are all false and idle, if every one of these succedania should fail, I still do maintain, that the West India planters can and will indemnify themselves by the increased *price* of their produce in our market ; a principle which is so clear, that in questions of taxation, or any other question of policy, this sort of argument would undoubtedly be admitted.

I say, therefore, that the West Indians, who contend against the abolition, are non-suited in every part of the argument.

Do they say that importations are necessary ? I have shewn that the very numbers in the gang may be kept up by procreation. Is this denied ? I say, the plough, horses, machinery, domestic slaves, and all the other succedania will supply the deficiency. Is it persisted that the deficiency can in no way be supplied, and that the quantity of produce must diminish ? I then revert to that irrefragable argument, that the increase of price will make up their loss, and is a clear ultimate security.

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I have in my hand the Extract from a pamphlet, which states, in very dreadful colours, what thousands and tens of thousands will be ruined; how our wealth will be impaired; one third of our commerce cut off for ever; how our manufactures will droop in consequence, our land-tax be raised, our marine destroyed, while France, our natural enemy, and rival, will strengthen herself by our weakness. [A cry of assent being heard from several parts of the House, Mr. Wilberforce added,) I beg, Sir, that Gentlemen will not mistake me. The pamphlet, from which this prophecy is taken, was written by Mr. Glover in 1774, on a very different occasion—and I would therefore ask Gentlemen, whether it is indeed fulfilled? Is our wealth decayed? our commerce cut off? our manufactures and our marine destroyed? Is France raised upon our ruins?—On the contrary, do we not see, by the instance of this pamphlet, how men in a desponding moment will picture to themselves the most gloomy consequences, from causes by no means to be apprehended. We are all, perhaps, in this respect, apt sometimes to be carried away  
by



by a frightened imagination—Like the poor negroes, we are all, in our turn, subject to *Obiba*; and when we have an interest to bias us, we are carried away ten thousand times the more.

The African merchants told us last year, that if less than two men to a ton were to be allowed, the trade could not continue. Mr. Tarleton, instructed by the whole trade of Liverpool, declared the same; told us that commerce would be ruined, and our manufactures would migrate to France.—We have petitions on the table from the manufacturers, but, I believe, they are not dated at Havre, or any port in France; and yet it is certain, that, out of twenty ships last year from Liverpool, not less than thirteen carried this ruinous proportion of less than two to a ton.

It is said that Liverpool will be undone—the trade, says Mr. Dalziel, at this time hangs upon a thread, and the smallest matter will overthrow it.

I believe, indeed, the trade hangs upon a thread ; for it is a losing trade to Liverpool at this time. It is a lottery, in which some men have made large fortunes, chiefly by being their own insurers, while others follow the example of a few lucky adventurers, and lose money by it. It is absurd to say, therefore, that Liverpool will be ruined by the abolition, or that it will feel the difference very sensibly, since the whole outward-bound tonnage of the Slave Trade amounts only to 1-fifteenth of the outward bound tonnage of Liverpool.—We ought to remember also, that the Slave Trade actually was suspended during some years of the war ; nor did any calamity follow from it.

As to shipping, our fisheries and other trades will furnish so many innocent and bloodless ways of employing vessels, that no mischief need be dreaded from this quarter.

The next subject which I shall touch upon, is, the influence of the Slave Trade on our *marine* ; and, instead of being a benefit to our sailors, as some have ignorantly argued, I do assert it is their . The *grave*  
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evidence

evidence upon the point is clear ; for, by the indefatigable industry, and public spirit of Mr. Clarkson, the muster rolls of all the slave ships have been collected and compared with those of other trades ; and it appears, in the result, that more sailors die in one year in the Slave Trade, than die in two years in all our other trades put together.

It appears, by the muster rolls, to 88 slave ships which sailed from Liverpool in 1787, that the original crews consisted of 3170 sailors—of these only 1428 returned : 642 died, or were lost, and 1100 were discharged on the voyage, or deserted, either in Africa, or the West-Indies. It appeared to me for a long time unaccountable, how so vast a proportion of these sailors should leave their ships in the West Indies ; but I shall quote here a letter from Governor Parry at Barbadoes, which explains this difficulty :

*Extract of a letter from Governor Parry, to Lord Sydney, dated May 13, 1788, transmitting two Petitions.*

“ To the African trade on the coast I cannot venture to speak, not being sufficiently acquainted with it; but am fearful such monstrous abuses have crept into it, as to make the interference of the British Legislature absolutely necessary; and have to lament, that it falls to my lot to possess your Lordship with the unpleasing information contained in the enclosed petitions, which is fully demonstrative of the shameful practices carried on in that unnatural commerce.”

He then speaks of having seen Captain Bibby, who is the person mentioned in the following petitions, though the other Captain had endeavoured to prevent it; and, he says, he has sent back the pawns (mentioned also in the petitions) to their enraged parents—adding, “ That I cannot help having my suspicions; and I was yesterday told, that he had private instructions from the petitioners not to present the petitions to

to

to me, if Bibby would quietly resign the Pawns; which leads me to believe there was a general combination in these unwarrantable practices, among all the masters of the vessels then in Cameroons river."

He then comes to the subject of the British sailors—"Your Lordship (says he) is perfectly informed of the nefarious practices of the African trade, and the cruel manner in which the greater number of the masters treat their seamen. There is scarcely a vessel in that trade that calls at Barbadoes, from which I have not a complaint made to me, either by the master or the seamen; but more frequently the latter, who are often shamefully used; for the African traders at home, being obliged to send out their ships very strong handed, as well from the unhealthiness of the climate, as the necessity of guarding the Slaves, soon feel the expence of seamen's wages; and as soon as they come amongst these islands, and all danger of insurrection is removed, the masters quarrel with their seamen, upon the most frivolous pretences, and turn them on shore on the first island they stop



at, sometimes with, and sometimes without paying them their wages; and Barbadoes being the windward station, has generally a large proportion of these men thrown in upon her; and sorry am I to say, that many of these valuable subjects are, from sickness, and the dire necessity of entering into foreign employ for maintenance, lost to the British nation."

Thus do we see how Mr. Clarkson's account of the muster-rolls is verified, and why it is that so vast a proportion of sailors in the slave ships is lost to this country.—But let us touch also on the petitions which Governor Parry speaks of. It seems that the Captain Bibby before mentioned had carried off from Africa thirty of the King's children and relations, left in pawn with him, who retaliated by seizing five English Captains. These Captains dispatch a vessel with petitions to Governor Parry, to send back the King's sons, in order to their own release.—Now, Sir, let us mark the stile of these petitions—"I James M'Gauty,—I William Willoughby, &c. being on shore on the execution of our business, were seized by a  
body



body of armed natives, who lay in ambush in order to take us.”—What villains must these Africans be, to seize so designedly such friends as the British subjects, and this merely with a view to get back their own children !—“ This,” says the petition, “ they effected, and dragged us to their town, where they treated us in a most savage and barbarous manner, and loaded us with irons.”—Observe, Sir, the indignant spirit of these Captains—British freemen to be loaded with irons ! White men in custody to these barbarous Negroes !—But what was the cause of this abominable outrage ? “ On account,” say they, “ of the *imprudent* behaviour of Captain Robert Bibby” — But what was the *imprudence* ?—“ who carried off thirty pawns, who were the King and traders’ sons, daughters, and relations.” — Here, then, we have a picture of the equitable spirit in which this trade is carried on.—These Princes and Chiefs, who, by Captain Bibby’s *imprudence*, had lost all their families and children, propose, however, to satisfy every demand, and to give these Captains their liberty, provided only they may have their children back again.—

But

But, say two of the Captains, “ We, finding that we could not comply with their *extravagant* conditions, did endeavour to regain our liberty, which we effected. But we verily believe, that our respective voyages are entirely ruined, the natives being determined to make no further trade with either of us, nor pay the above debts, until their sons, daughters, &c. are returned, and debarring us of wood, water, or any country provisions ; therefore we shall be forced to leave the river immediately, and, on that account, we think our voyages ruined, as before.”

It has been urged by some persons, in proof of the *wicked barbarity* of these Kings and Chiefs, that they pawn their own children ; from which it is concluded, that they feel no sort of affection for them, and therefore deserve all the evils which we inflict upon them.

The contrary is in truth the case ; for the Captains, knowing the affection they have for their relations, are willing to take them as hostages for very considerable debts, and  
are

are sensible of their *ideal* value, though the *real* value is trifling; and the scene which I have just laid before you very fairly shews both the general spirit of our Captains, and the wretched situation to which our commerce has reduced these African Princes:—And if, Sir, at the very moment when Parliament was known to be enquiring into this trade, these abuses are thus boldly persisted in, how can we suppose that any regulations, or any palliatives, can overcome these enormities, and justify our continuance of the trade?—It is true, the African Committee hear little of the matter:—for we find, that even these Captains, who were in prison, instructed the bearer of their petition, not to apply to Governor Parry, except in the last necessity, but merely to get back the King's sons, meaning quietly to compromise matters with Captain Bibby; and if it were not for the vigilance of Governor Parry, the truth would never have come out. In like manner, we find, that although very few sailors, when they come to Liverpool, go into an expensive prosecution of their Captains, yet Governor Parry hears of complaints against them eve-

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ry day; and we find, that Justice Otley, in the island of St. Vincent's, where law is cheap, both hears their grievances, and redresses them.

There is one other argument, in my opinion a very weak and absurd one, which many persons, however, have much dwelt upon—I mean, that, if we relinquish the slave trade, France will take it up.—If the slave trade be such as I have described it, and if the House is also convinced of this—if it be in truth both wicked and impolitic; we cannot wish a greater mischief to France than that she should adopt it.—For the sake of France, however, and for the sake of humanity, I trust—nay, I am sure—she will not. France is too enlightened a nation, to begin pushing a scandalous as well as ruinous traffic, at the very time when England sees her folly, and resolves to give it up. It is clearly no argument whatever against the *wickedness* of the trade, that France will adopt it:—For those who argue thus may argue equally, that we may rob, murder, and commit any crime, which any one else would have committed, if we did

did not.—The truth is, that, by our example, we shall produce the contrary effect. If we refuse the abolition, we shall lie, therefore, under the twofold guilt, of knowingly persisting in this wicked trade ourselves, and, as far as we can, of inducing France to do the same.—Let us, therefore, lead the way—let this enlightened country take precedence in this noble cause, and we shall soon find that France is not backward to follow, nay, perhaps, to accompany our steps.—If they should be mad enough to adopt it, they will have every disadvantage to contend with—They must buy the negroes much dearer than we; the manufactures they sell must probably be ours; an expensive floating factory, ruinous to the health of sailors, which we have hitherto maintained must be set up; and, after all, the trade can serve only as a sort of Gibraltar, upon which they may spend their strength, while the productive branches of their commerce must in proportion be neglected and starved.

But I have every ground for believing that the French will not be thus wicked and  
 absurd;



absurd ; Mr. Neckar, the enlightened minister of that country, a man who has introduced moral and religious principles into Government, more than has been common with many ministers, has actually recorded his abhorrence of the Slave Trade ; he has under his own hand in his publication on the finances\* pledged himself, as it were, to the

\* Extract from Mr. Neckar's Treatise on the Administration of the Finances of France. Vol. 1. ch. 13.

The Colonies of France contain as we have seen, near five hundred thousand Slaves, and it is from the number of those wretches, that the inhabitants set a value on their Plantations. What a fatal prospect ! and how profound a subject for reflection !—Alas ! how inconsequent we are both in our morality, and our principles. We preach up humanity, and yet go every Year to bind in chains twenty thousand natives of Africa ! We call the Moors barbarians and ruffians, because they attack the liberty of Europeans, at the risk of their own ; yet these Europeans go, without danger, and as mere speculators to purchase slaves, by gratifying the cupidity of their masters, and excite all those bloody scenes which are the usual preliminaries of this traffick ! In short, we pride ourselves on the superiority of man, and it is with reason we discover the superiority in the wonderful and mysterious unfolding of the intellectual faculties ; and yet a trifling difference in the hair of the head, or in the colour of the epidermis, is sufficient to change our respect into contempt, and to engage us to place Beings, like ourselves, in the rank of those animals, devoid of reason, whom we subject to the yoke, that we may make use of their strength and of their instincts as command.

abolition



abolition; and it is impossible that a man can be so lost to all sense of decency, and common consistency of character, as not to forward by every influence in his power, a cause in which he has so publicly declared himself. There is another anecdote which I mention here with pleasure, which is, that the King of France very lately being requested to dissolve a society set up in France, for the abolition of the Slave Trade, made answer, “ that he certainly should not, for that he was very glad it existed.”

I believe, Sir, I have now touched upon all the objections of any consequence, which are made to the abolition of this Trade.—When we consider the vastness of the Continent of Africa; when we reflect how all other countries have for some centuries past, been advancing in happiness and civilization; when we think how in this same period all improvement in Africa has been defeated by her intercourse with Britain; when we reflect how it is we ourselves that have degraded them to that wretched brutishness and barbarity which we now plead as the justification of our guilt; how the Slav  
Trade

Trade has *enslaved their minds*, blackened their character and sunk them so low in the scale of animal beings, that some think the very apes are of a higher class, and fancy the *Ourang Outang* has given them the go-by.—What a mortification must we feel at having so long neglected to think of our guilt, or to attempt any reparation: It seems, indeed, as if we had determined to forbear from all interference until the measure of our folly and wickedness was so full and complete; until the impolicy which eventually belongs to vice, was become so plain and glaring, that not an individual in the country should refuse to join in the abolition: It seems as if we had waited until the persons most interested should be tired out with the folly and nefariousness of the trade, and should unite in petitioning against it.

Let us then make such amends as we can for the mischiefs we have done to that unhappy Continent: Let us recollect what Europe itself was no longer ago than three or four centuries. What if I should be able to shew this House that in a civilized part of Europe, in the time of our Henry II. there  
were

were people who actually sold their own children ? what, if I should tell them, that England itself was that country ? what if I should point out to them that the very place where this inhuman traffic was carried on was *the City of Bristol* ? Ireland at that time used to drive a considerable trade in slaves, with these neighbouring barbarians ; but a great plague having infested the country, the Irish were struck with a panic, suspected ( I am sure very properly ) that the plague was a punishment sent from Heaven, for the sin of the Slave Trade, and therefore abolished it. All I ask, therefore, of the people of Bristol, is, that they would become as civilized now, as Irishmen were four hundred years ago. Let us put an end at once to this inhuman traffic,—let us stop this effusion of human blood. The true way to virtue is by withdrawing from temptation;—let us then withdraw from these wretched Africans, those temptations to fraud, violence, cruelty, and injustice, which the Slave Trade furnishes. Wherever the sun shines, let us go round the world with him diffusing our beneficence ; but let us not traffic, only that we may set Kings against  
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their Subjects, Subjects against their Kings, sowing discord in every village, fear and terror in every family, setting millions of our fellow creatures a hunting each other for slaves, creating fairs and markets for human flesh, through one whole continent of the world, and under the name of policy, concealing from ourselves all the baseness and iniquity of such a traffic.

Why may we not hope, ere long, to see Hans-towns established on the coast of Africa, as they were on the Baltic? It is said the Africans are idle, but they are not too idle at least to catch one another: seven hundred to one thousand tons of rice are annually bought of them; by the same rule, why should we not buy more: at Gambia one thousand of them are seen continually at work: Why should not some more thousands be set to work in the same manner? It is the Slave Trade that causes their idleness, and every other mischief. We are told by one witness, “ they sell one another as they can;” and while they can get brandy by catching one another, no wonder they are too idle for any regular work.

I have

I have one word more to add upon a most material point ; but it is a point so self evident, that I shall be extremely short.

It will appear, from every thing which I have said, that it is not regulation, it is not mere palliatives, that can cure this enormous evil :—Total abolition is the only possible cure for it.—The Jamaica report, indeed, admits much of the evil, but recommends it to us, so to regulate the trade, that no persons should be kidnapped or made slaves *contrary to the custom of Africa*. But may they not be made slaves *unjustly*, and yet by no means *contrary to the custom of Africa* ? I have shewn they may ; for all the customs of Africa are rendered savage and unjust through the influence of this trade : besides how can we discriminate between the slaves justly and unjustly made ? Can we know them by physiognomy ? or, if we could, does any man believe that the British Captains can, by any regulation in this country, be prevailed upon to refuse all such slaves as have not been fairly, honestly, and uprightly enslaved ? But granting even that they should do this, yet how would the



rejected slaves be recompensed ? They are brought, as we are told, from three or four thousand miles off, and exchanged like cattle from one hand to another, until they reach the coast. We see then that it is the existence of the Slave Trade that is the spring of all this internal traffic, and that the remedy cannot be applied without abolition. Again, as to the middle passage, the evil is radical there also ; the Merchants profit depends upon the number that can be crowded together, and upon the shortness of their allowance : Astringents, escaroticks, and all the other arts of making them up for sale, are of the very essence of the trade ; these arts will be concealed both from the purchaser and the legislature ; they are necessary to the owner's profit, and they will be practised. Again, chains and arbitrary treatment must be used in transporting them ; our seamen must be taught to play the tyrant, and that depravation of manners among them ( which some very judicious persons have treated of, as the very worst part of this business ) cannot be hindered while the trade itself continues.

As



As to the slave merchants, they have already told you, that if two slaves to a ton are not permitted, the trade cannot continue; so that the objections are done away by themselves on this quarter; and in the West Indies, I have shewn that the abolition is the only possible stimulus whereby a regard to population, and consequently to the happiness of the negroes, can be effectually excited in those islands.

I trust, therefore, I have shewn, that upon every ground, the total abolition ought to take place. I have urged many things which are not my own leading motives for proposing it, since I have wished to shew every description of Gentlemen, and particularly the West India planters, who deserve every attention, that the abolition is politic upon their own principles also.

Policy, however, Sir, is not my principle, and I am not ashamed to say it. There is a principle above every thing that is political; and when I reflect on the command which says, "*Thou shalt do no murder,*" believing the authority to be divine, how can

I dare to set up any reasonings of my own against it? And, Sir, when we think of eternity, and of the future consequences of all human conduct, what is there in this life that should make any man contradict the dictates of his conscience, the principles of justice, the laws of religion, and of God.

Sir, the nature and all the circumstances of this trade are now laid open to us; we can no longer plead ignorance,—we cannot evade it,—it is now an object placed before us,—we cannot pass it; we may spurn it, we may kick it out of our way, but we cannot turn aside so as to avoid seeing it; for it is brought now so directly before our eyes, that this House must decide, and must justify to all the world, and to their own consciences, the rectitude of the grounds and principles of their decision.

A Society has been established for the abolition of this trade, in which Dissenters, Quakers, Churchmen—in which the most conscientious of all persuasions have all united, and made a common cause in this great question.

question. Let not Parliament be the only body that is insensible to the principles of national justice. Let us make reparation to Africa, so far as we can, by establishing a trade upon true commercial principles, and we shall soon find the rectitude of our conduct rewarded, by the benefits of a regular and a growing commerce.

I shall now move the several Resolutions, upon which I do not ask the House to decide to-night, but shall consider the debate as adjourned to any day next week that may be thought most convenient.

## RESOLUTIONS.

### I.

**T**HAT the number of slaves annually carried from the coast of Africa, in British vessels, is supposed to be about 38,000

That the number annually carried to the British West India Islands, has (on an average of four years, to the year 1787 inclusive) amounted to about — 22,500

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That

That the number annually retained in the said Islands, as far as appears by the Custom House accounts, has amounted, on the same average, to about, — — 17,500

## II.

THAT much the greater number of the negroes, carried away by European vessels, are brought from the interior parts of the continent of Africa, and many of them from a very great distance.

That no precise information appears to have been obtained of the manner in which these persons have been made slaves.

But that from the accounts, as far as any have been procured on this subject, with respect to the slaves brought from the interior parts of Africa, and from the information which has been received respecting the countries nearer to the coast, the slaves may in general be classed under some of the following descriptions :

1st. Prisoners taken in war.

2d. Free persons sold for debt, or on account of real or imputed crimes, particularly adultery and witchcraft ; in which cases they are frequently sold with their whole families, and sometimes for the profit of those by whom they are condemned.

3d. Do.

3d. Domestic slaves sold for the profit of their masters; in some places at the will of the masters, and in some places, on being condemned for real or imputed crimes.

4th. Persons made slaves by various acts of oppression, violence, or fraud, committed either by the Princes and Chiefs, of those countries on their subjects, or by private individuals on each other; or, lastly, by Europeans engaged in this traffic.

### III.

THAT the trade carried on by European nations on the coast of Africa, for the purchase of slaves, has necessarily a tendency to occasion frequent and cruel wars among the natives, to produce unjust convictions and punishments for pretended or aggravated crimes, to encourage acts of oppression, violence and fraud, and to obstruct the natural course of civilization and improvements in those countries.

### IV.

THAT the continent of Africa, in its present state, furnishes several valuable articles of commerce highly important to the trade and manufactures of this kingdom, and which are in a great measure peculiar to that quarter of the globe; and  
that

that the soil and climate have been found, by experience, well adapted to the production of other articles, with which we are now either wholly, or in great part, supplied by foreign nations.

That an extensive commerce with Africa in these commodities, might probably be substituted in the place of that which is now carried on in slaves, so as at least to afford a return for the same quantity of goods as has annually been carried thither in British vessels.

And, lastly, That such a commerce might reasonably be expected to increase in proportion to the progress of civilization and improvement on that continent.

#### V.

THAT the Slave Trade has been found, by experience, to be peculiarly injurious and destructive to the British seamen who have been employed therein; and that the mortality among them has been much greater than in his Majesty's ships stationed on the coast of Africa, or than has been usual in British vessels employed in any other trade.

#### VI.

THAT the mode of transporting the slaves from Africa to the West Indies necessarily exposes them  
to



to many and grievous sufferings, for which no regulation can provide an adequate remedy; and that, in consequence thereof, a large proportion of them has annually perished during the voyage.

## VII.

THAT a large proportion of the slaves so transported, has also perished in the harbours in the West Indies previous to their being sold. That this loss is stated by the assembly of the Island of Jamaica at about four and a half per. cent. of the number imported; and is, by medical persons of experience in that Island, ascribed, in great measure, to diseases contracted during the voyage, and to the mode of treatment on board the ships, by which those diseases have been suppressed for a time, in order to render the slaves fit for immediate sale.

## VIII.

THAT the loss of newly imported Negroes, within the first three years after their importation, bears a large proportion to the whole number imported.

## IX.

THAT the natural increase of population, among the Slaves in the islands, appear to have been impeded principally by the following causes :  
1st.

1st. The inequality of the number of the sexes, in the importations from Africa.

2d. The general dissoluteness of manners among the Slaves, and the want of proper regulations for the encouragement of marriages, and of rearing children.

3d. Particular diseases which are prevalent among them, and which are in some instances attributed to too severe labour or rigorous treatment; and in others to insufficient or improper food.

4th. Those diseases which affect a large proportion of Negro children in their infancy, and those to which the Negroes newly imported from Africa have been found to be particularly liable.

## X.

THAT the whole number of Slaves in the island of Jamaica, in 1768, was about — — — — 167,000;

THAT the number in 1774, was stated by Governor Keith, about — 193,000;

And, that the number in December 1787, as stated by Lieutenant Governor Clarke, was about — — . 256,000.  
That,

That, by comparing these number with the numbers imported into and retained in the island, in the several years from 1768 to 1774 inclusive, as appearing from the accounts delivered to the committee of trade by Mr. Fuller ; and in the several years from 1775 inclusive, to 1787 also inclusive, as appearing by the accounts delivered in by the Inspector General ; and allowing for a loss of about one twenty second part by deaths on ship-board after entry, as stated in the Report of the Assembly of the said Island of Jamaica, it appears,

That the annual excess of deaths above births in the Island in the whole period of nineteen years, has been in the proportion of about seven eighths per cent. computing on the medium number of Slaves in the Island during that period.

That in the first six years of the said nineteen, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather more than one on every hundred on the medium number.

That in the last thirteen years of the said nineteen, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of about three-fifths on every hundred on the medium number ; and that a number of Slaves, amounting to 15,000, is stated by the report of the island of Jamaica to have perished, during the latter period in consequence of repeated hurricanes, and of the want of foreign supplies of provisions.

## XI.

That the whole number of Slaves in the island of Barbadoes was, in the year 1764, according to the account given in to the Committee of Trade by Mr. Braithwaite, — — —

70,706

That in 1774, the number was, by the same account — —

74,874

In 1780, by ditto — —

68,270

In 1781, after the hurricane, according to the same account — — —

63,248

In 1786, by ditto — —

62,115

That by comparing these numbers with the number imported into this island, according to the same account, (not allowing for any re-exportation) the annual excess of deaths, above births, in the ten years from 1764 to 1774, was in the proportion of about five on every hundred, computing on the medium number of Slaves in the island during that period.

That in the seven years from 1774 to 1780, both inclusive, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of about one and one-third on every hundred, on the medium number.

That between the year 1780 and 1781, there appears to have been a decrease in the number of Slaves of about 5,000.

That in the six years from 1781 to 1786, both inclusive, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather less than seven-eighths in every hundred, on the medium number.

And that in the four years from 1783 to 1786, both inclusive, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather less than one-third in every hundred, on the medium number.

And that during the whole period, there is no doubt that some were exported from the island, but considerably more in the first part of this period than in the last.

## XII.

THAT the accounts from the Leeward Islands, and from Dominica, Grenada, and Saint Vincent's; do not furnish sufficient grounds for comparing the state of population in the said Islands at different periods, with the number of Slaves which have been from time to time imported into the said Islands, and exported therefrom.

But that, from the evidence which has been received respecting the present state of these Islands, as well as of Jamaica and Barbadoes; and from a consideration of the means obviating the causes which have hitherto operated to impede the natural  
increase

increase of the Slaves, and of lessening the demand for manual labour, without diminishing the profit of the planter, it appears that no considerable or permanent inconvenience would result from discontinuing the farther importation of African Slaves.

N. B. It is the intention after passing these resolutions, to move for leave to bring in a bill for the total abolition of the Slave Trade.

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## L O R D P E N R H Y N,

After a tribute of approbation to the beauty, force, and eloquence of what Mr. Wilberforce had just delivered, said, he should indeed appear but with an ill grace ; yet was he so firmly fixed in his opinion of the mischiefs which an unqualified abolition of the slave trade must occasion, that he found it his duty to oppose the main point of the Honourable Gentleman's argument. He did so from a pre-conviiction—he did so from the errors—palpable errors to be found in the reports, speeches, and quotations al-  
luded



luded to, most of which were either mis-stated or misapplied. A regulation might be requisite; but a total abolition was going a step beyond the bounds of prudence or rectitude.

### MR. BAMBER GASCOYNE,

On the same side of the argument, contended, that a total unqualified abolition would do an injury to private property and to public interest. The Honourable Gentleman, who had his plan so near at heart, gave the Committee a very fine system of agriculture, which country gentlemen, who understood the plough, might conceive well adapted to this country; but how it applied to the burning regions of the west, was yet to be proved. He then entered into a defence of what he said last year on the subject of tonnage, which he contended was now mis-stated by the Honourable Gentleman; and, as to the loss of seamen, he would take upon him to aver, that, instead of a check to the African slave trade serving our marine, it did them the most essential

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injury, numbers being at this moment in want of bread, on account of the bill passed in the last Session of Parliament, for the regulation of tonnage. He did not wish to give a hasty opinion on the business, and therefore requested, that time might be allowed for consideration of the subject, on the calculations made in the Honourable Gentleman's speech ; and he trusted, when this fairness was adopted, and the warmth of prejudice removed, that the African slave trade would be found productive of a considerable revenue to this country.

### MR. WILBERFORCE

Assured the House, that he had not *wilfully* mis-stated the matter. He might err, but it was not with the consent of his mind ; for he really believed every syllable he had uttered to be strictly founded on truth. He begged it might be so understood, that he did not mean to bring the subject into debate on its broad basis at present.—He wished to give time for a due consideration of the subject ; and therefore, if  
it

it was agreeable to the Committee, should mention Monday as a proper day to go into the discussion of the several motions which were offered to the Committee.

### MR. BURKE

Gave his opinion on the subject.—It was, that the slave trade should be totally abolished.—It was a disgrace to human nature—it began in murderous war—it ended in perpetual exile ; and what aggravated the scene of horror was, that the unhappy sufferers were not known to be guilty of any crime whatsoever. He was against going at all into those merits contained in the papers which the Honourable Gentleman had laid upon the table. His idea was, that the motion should now be made for a total abolition of this inhuman traffic ; so that, in process of time, commerce might extend itself over the vast continent of Africa, as well as in the more narrowed and civilized parts of Europe. But however he coincided in the general idea with the Honourable Gentleman, yet he could not heartily

agree in the mode by which the purport of that idea was to be fulfilled. He wished for no abstracted questions, but to come at once to the point ; for each motion, as now read to the House, might occasion debate, and that debate produce, *possibly*, he would not say *probably*, a cause to fight a word out ; and if it should, by any misfortune, be the means of putting a negative upon the whole, the matter would appear as a disgrace upon the journals of Parliament. Hence he recommended brevity, and advised that the motion should contain no more than a resolution of the Committee, that the slave trade should be totally abolished ; to which motion he should give his most hearty affirmative, on account of the purity of its principles ; for, if the bill was thrown out in the Lords, the resolutions, standing on the Journals, would become a *recorded* censure on the Commons.

Instead of seeing the unhappy Africans thus treated by the Sons of Freedom, he trusted, we should instantly put a stop to this evil, and, instead of countenancing the sale of our fellow creatures,  
begin

begin a new kind of traffic, and barter illicit profit for glorious humanity. His reason for troubling the House at present, was, that his duty in another place, might, in all probability, make it impossible for him to attend on Monday next, and, therefore, what sentiments he had to offer, he then wished to deliver. He paid many compliments to Mr. Wilberforce for what he said, and declared, that it might be truly called one of the best speeches ever delivered in Parliament, in favour of a race of beings who had this sole comfort, that the *Slave* was only compensated by not being a *Man*.

Mr. P I T T

Could not permit so important a matter to pass without saying a few words. He gave his most hearty concurrence to all that had been so eloquently spoken by his Honourable Friend, and was fully convinced in his own mind, that there should be a *total and unqualified repeal of the Slave Trade Law*. He differed with Mr. Burke as to his idea respecting the motion; because he thought that nothing short of unconditionally



ally abolishing the whole of this traffic, could be of service to the cause of humanity. The House, he therefore trusted, would cordially concur in one opinion, and he wished, for the honour of Britain, it might be an unanimous vote on the occasion. As to France, he trusted, from every matter he could learn, that she would be content to follow our plan of emancipation, when she found she could not take the lead in so glorious a business.

He said it was, indeed, a momentous question, and that nothing but its not being truly understood, could ever have prevented its being hitherto adopted. However, he had no doubt of this great question being at last decided by the immutable law of justice, for it was a subject on which truth must and would be invincible. Something had been thrown out respecting the advantage foreign countries might take of our giving up this traffic—but that was idle speculation. Great Britain was always able to prevent an illicit trade of negroes by any other power to the West Indies ; but of that



there was no great apprehension ; the French were probably following up our idea, and, perhaps, meaning to enter into a negotiation with us on the subject.

### MR. F O X

Said, he never had heard a debate with more satisfaction than the present. With regard to the plan of laying the propositions before the House, where he was agreed as to the substance of a measure, he did not like to differ as to the form of it. If, however, he differed in any thing, it was rather with a view to forward the business than to injure it, or to throw any thing like an obstacle or impediment in its way. Nothing like either should come from him. What he thought was, that all the propositions were not necessary to be voted, previous to the ultimate vote, though some of them undoubtedly were. In order to explain this, he reminded the Honourable Gentleman, that the propositions were of two sorts ; one  
sort

fort alleged the fit grounds on which the House ought to proceed to abolish the Slave Trade, viz. that it was a disgrace to humanity, that it was attended with the loss of lives to our seamen, as well as the Africans, &c. &c. Another fort contained assertions in answer, as it were, to the objections that had been stated, or were supposed likely to be stated. The putting such resolutions on their Journals might create a difficulty to foreign powers; because what might be a matter of objection to Great-Britain, might not be so to any other country.

Mr. Fox applauded Mr. Wilberforce, and gave him his thanks for professing to do what he thought it their duty to do, viz. to completely abolish the traffic in Slaves; a traffic, for continuing which, on no ground, either a plea of policy or necessity could be urged. Wherever an effectual remedy could not be had, Mr. Fox said, he approved a palliative, because something like a remedy was better than no remedy at all; in the present case, an effectual remedy was not only more desirable, but it was much less difficult to be obtained than a palliative.

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He was glad that the Propositions were to be put upon the Journals ; because if from any misfortune, the business should fail, while it stood upon the Journals, it might succeed another year ; certain it was, it could not fail to succeed sooner or later. Foreign countries, when they heard that the matter had been discussed in that House, might follow the example, or they might go before us, and set one themselves. If this were to happen, though we might be the losers, humanity would be the gainer.

Mr. Fox reminded the House that he had always been particularly sanguine that whenever they examined the Slave Trade thoroughly, they would find it not only inhuman but impolitic ; from what the Honourable Gentleman, who had submitted the Propositions to their consideration, had said, it was clear there was as little policy as humanity in the Trade. But what he rose chiefly for, Mr. Fox said, was to notice what had fallen from the Right Honourable Gentleman respecting the probability of foreign nations assuming the Slave Trade on our abandoning it, and,

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in an illicit manner, supplying our West-India Islands with Slaves. He had intended to have risen to have said the very same thing, because he was convinced that it was the fit tone to be held on such a subject, and that foreign nations might be given to understand, that when this country thought proper to abolish the Slave trade, we had resources among us to prevent that Trade being carried on in any manner with our Colonies.—With regard to what the Honourable Gentleman who spoke last had said, in declaring that a clandestine trade in Slaves was worse than a legal one, he differed entirely. He thought such a trade, if it existed at all, should be only clandestine. A trade in human flesh was so scandalous, that it was to the last degree infamous to let it be openly carried on by the authority of the Government of any country. Mr. Fox said, he had sometimes been thought to use too harsh expressions of France, in treating her as the rival of this country.—Politically speaking, France certainly was our rival; but he well knew the distinction between political enmity and illiberal prejudice.—If there was any great  
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and enlightened nation now existing in Europe, it was France, which was as likely as any nation on the face of the globe, to act, on the present subject, with warmth and with enthusiasm ; to catch a spark from the light of our fire, and to run a race with us in promoting the ends of humanity.

If France should decline to join with us, the honour, indeed would then be all our own—but he thought, however, we ought not to refuse them a participation of this honour, if we could thereby forward the great ends of humanity, and unite them immediately in the same cause.

## THE SPEAKER

Paid a high compliment to Mr. Wilberforce, and warmly approved of the Abolition.

## ALDERMAN NEWNHAM

Was against any Bill of the kind.

Mr.



Mr. D E M P S T E R

Enquired whether there was to be a compensation to mortgagees and planters.

Mr. P I T T

Said that he did not wish to be understood as pledged for any compensation.

L O R D P E N R H Y N

Accused Mr. Wilberforce of misquoting Mr. Long, and spoke warmly against the Abolition, observing that Seventy Millions of property were involved in this question.

Mr. S M I T H.

Said a few words in favour of the Abolition, and the House adjourned.

F I N I S.





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